In the Claims:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Original) Process for separating an emulsion of a bituminous oil and water into a liquid water phase and a liquid bituminous oil phase, wherein the following steps are performed:

(a) raising the temperature of the bituminous oil/water emulsion having a temperature of below 100 °C to a temperature of above 140 °C, and

(b) performing a phase separation wherein a liquid water phase and a liquid bituminous oil phase are obtained, wherein the heating of the emulsion in step (a) is effected by first mixing part of liquid bituminous oil phase obtained in step (b) having a temperature of above 140 °C with the bituminous oil/water emulsion and subsequently raising the temperature of the resulting mixture to a temperature of about 140 °C by making use of indirect heat exchange means.

2. (Previously presented) The process of claim 1, wherein in step (a) the temperature is raised to a value of between 140-200 °C.

3. (Previously presented) The process of claim 2, wherein in step (a) the temperature is raised to a value of between 160-200 °C.

4. (Previously presented) The process of claim 3, wherein the temperature of the resulting mixture is raised from a value of between 120-150 °C to a value of between 160-180 °C by making use of the indirect heat exchange means.

5. (Previous presented) The process of claim 1, wherein the pressure in step (b) is sufficiently high in order to obtain both phases in the liquid state.

6. (Previously presented) The process of claim 5, wherein in step (b) the liquid water phase has a pH of below 7.

7. (Previously presented) The process of claim 6, wherein the pH of the liquid water phase is between 4 and 6.

8. (Previously presented) The process of claim 1, wherein the starting emulsion has a water content of between 1-40% by weight, a surfactants content of between 0.01-5% by weight and an oil content of between 60-85% by weight, wherein the oil alone has a viscosity of above 305 Pa.s at 20 °C.

9. (Previously presented) The gasification process for preparing synthesis gas, wherein a liquid bituminous oil is obtained according to the process of claim 1 and wherein said liquid bituminous oil, having a temperature of above 140 °C, is fed to a gasification unit in which synthesis gas is obtained.

Claim 10 (canceled).

11. (New) A composition, comprising:

a liquid bituminous oil phase obtained by the process comprising the steps of:

(a) raising the temperature of a bituminous oil/water emulsion having a temperature of below 100 °C to a temperature of above 140 °C, and

(b) performing a phase separation wherein a liquid water phase and said liquid bituminous oil phase are obtained, wherein the heating of the bituminous oil/water emulsion in step (a) is effected by first mixing part of said liquid bituminous oil phase obtained in step (b) having a temperature of above 140 °C with said bituminous oil/water emulsion and subsequently raising the temperature of the resulting mixture to a temperature of about 140 °C by making use of indirect heat exchange means.

12. (New ) A composition as recited in claim 11, wherein in step (a) the temperature is raised to a value of between 140-200 °C.

13. (New ) A composition as recited in claim 12, wherein in step (a) the temperature is raised to a value of between 160-200 °C.

14. (New ) A composition as recited in claim 13, wherein the temperature of the resulting mixture is raised from a value of between 120-150 °C to a value of between 160-180 °C by making use of the indirect heat exchange means.

15. (New) A composition as recited in claim 11, wherein the pressure in step (b) is sufficiently high in order to obtain both phases in the liquid state.

16. (New) A composition as recited in claim 15, wherein in step (b) the liquid water phase has a pH of below 7.

17. (New ) A composition as recited in claim 16, wherein the pH of the liquid water phase is between 4 and 6.

18. (New) A composition as recited in claim 11, wherein the starting emulsion has a water content of between 1-40% by weight, a surfactants content of between 0.01-5% by weight and an oil content of between 60-85% by weight, wherein the oil alone has a viscosity of above 305 Pa.s at 20 °C.

19. (New) A method, comprising:

feeding the composition of claim 12 to a gasification burner means with oxygen whereby a partial oxidation takes place to form a hot synthesis gas comprising carbon monoxide and hydrogen.

20. (New) A method as recited in claim 19, further comprising:

lowering the temperature of said hot synthesis gas.

21. (New) A method as recited in claim 20, wherein said hot synthesis gas is at a temperature between 1300 °C to 1500 °C and the lowered temperature of said hot synthesis gas is between 300 to 350 °C.

22. (New) A method as recited in claim 21, wherein the lowering of said hot synthesis gas is done by indirect heat exchange means.